



**Latah County  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

P.O. Box 8068 ♦ 522 South Adams ♦ Moscow, Idaho 83843  
(208) 882-8580 ♦ fax (208) 883-2280 ♦ e-mail [bocc@latah.id.us](mailto:bocc@latah.id.us)  
*Paul J. Kimmell ♦ Tom S. Stroschein ♦ John A. "Jack" Nelson*

RECEIVED  
JAN 26 2004  
Department of Water Resources

January 20, 2004

Mr. Karl Dreher, Director  
Idaho Department of Water Resources  
1301 North Orchard Street  
Boise, ID 83706

RE: Ground Water Management

Dear Director Dreher:

The Latah Board of County Commissioners value the opportunity to remark upon the petition filed by citizens groups of Latah County to designate the Grande Ronde aquifer "CRITICAL GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT AREA" pursuant to Idaho Code 42-233a; and to designate the Wanapum aquifer "GROUND WATER MANAGEMENT AREA" pursuant to Idaho Code 42-233b.

Historically, the Palouse region's communities as a whole have been proactive in setting forth goals to stabilize the Grande Ronde aquifer system by the year 2020. Through groundwater management planning efforts, including the efforts put forth by the Palouse Basin Aquifer Committee (PBAC), local water users continue to be committed to ensuring a dependable water supply.

We are grateful the Idaho Department of Water Resources and others had the vision to encourage local units of government and water interests working across political boundaries, to help manage and find solutions for protecting and conserving our groundwater resources. PBAC, a multi-state collaboration including the cities of Moscow, Pullman and Colfax, the University of Idaho, Washington State University, and the counties of Whitman and Latah, has an established long-term Groundwater Management Plan already in place. This intergovernmental effort has helped facilitate these politically difficult resource management discussions in an efficient and fair manner. However, we now recognize the need to actually implement more aggressive conservation measures as well as having a greater sensitivity and consideration in future land use development requests. We would hope such local management efforts, consistent with Idaho Code, would discourage your agency from initiating further intervention or action at this time.

If we are to achieve our goal of stabilizing the Grand Ronde aquifer, we will need to determine what surface water sources are available for recharge or storage. At present, the Washington Department of Ecology has funded a study to evaluate the Palouse River drainage through a statewide series of Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) studies. The WRIA process is an

opportunity for all Palouse region water users to work in a cooperative effort to monitor surface water quality and quantity and help determine where those sources might be located within the Palouse River Basin.

As the City of Moscow and the University of Idaho begin to curtail pumping from the Grande Ronde in an effort to stabilize this deeper aquifer, more pressure will be put on the Wanapum aquifer which in turn may impact some rural wells within Latah County. As a result, the Latah Board of County Commissioners is prepared to initiate a well monitoring program with rural homeowners and other non-municipal water users to actively record and monitor water levels and flows in these affected areas. The Board also recognizes the importance of our Comprehensive Land Use Plan which encourages "sound stewardship of the County's natural resources." Further, our Plan directs land use decision makers to "maintain sustainable groundwater resources and prevent degradation of groundwater quality." Our intention with such a program is to help insure more accurate information of our groundwater resources which will serve to compliment our county's comprehensive land use planning efforts.

We also support the City of Moscow's proposal to establish an additional local advisory group comprised of existing bi-state water users, including both municipal and rural, university expertise, economic development groups as well as conservation interests. Only through such a cooperative, long-term, and regional approach, will we insure a safe and abundant water supply for all our citizens. Further, such an advisory group could actively engage in the promotion and implementation of local conservation measures as well as the long-term protection of all our water resources for generations to come.

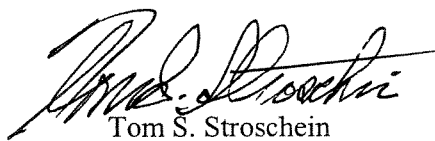
Therefore, the Latah Board of County Commissioners respectfully request that you not foreclose the management, facilitation, and evaluation currently in place through the local efforts of PBAC, municipal and rural water users, conservation interests and more recently, the WRIA process. The Board would request a 4-year extension period to complete the research currently in place to coincide with the 2008 completion of the WRIA study, before considering designation of these aquifers.

Again, thank you on behalf of Latah County.

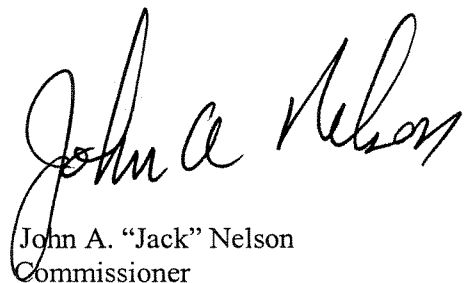
Respectfully submitted,



Paul J. Kimmell  
Chair



Tom S. Stroschein  
Commissioner



John A. "Jack" Nelson  
Commissioner

Cc: City of Moscow  
President's Office, University of Idaho  
City of Pullman  
Whitman County  
PBAC  
Palouse Water Conservation Network  
LEDC  
Rep. Shirley Ringo  
Rep. Tom Trail  
Sen. Gary Schroeder